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BULGARIAN REPORT LIKENS ANTONOV CASE TO KATKA STORY
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Bulgaria's state-run news agency today likened Sergei Antonov to famous victims of injustice in history and fiction, and accused Italy of bowing to CIA pressure by investigating him in the papal assassination attempt.

Antonov, an employee of Bulgaria's national airline, was arrested in Rome on Nov. 25, 1982, on suspicion of helping convicted terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca in the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II. Antonov has been in jail or under house arrest ever since, and his case has not come to trial.

The Bulgarian news agency BIA compared Antonov to the main character in Katka's novel "The Trial," who was arrested on unspecified charges, and to Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, wrongly accused of treason in 19th-century France.

"The details around Antonov's detention, however, go even beyond Katka's imagination," the report said. "Although there exists no evidence of his guilt, it is for already two years that his innocence has been rejected to be recognized."

It quoted French writer Emile Zola, a champion of Dreyfus' cause: "The truth is out and nothing can stop it."

"It is a well-known fact that Zola's prediction came true. But it is common knowledge that Dreyfus had to wait for 12 solid years ... Let's hope that for the honor of the Italian justice, its bodies won't allow the making of a decision which may discredit them in the face of the irreversible and infallible judgement of time," the article said.

"The terrorists and the CIA staff 'sages' alone can think that a political assassination is in a position to change the course of events in their own favor."